

Pope ordains bishops, asks them to be 'guardian angels'

VATICAN CITY - Ordaining new bishops for the first time in his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI called six men to be "guardian angels" of the people entrusted to their care.

Celebrating the ordinations in St. Peter's Basilica Sept. 29, the feast of Sts. Michael, Gabriel and Raphael, archangels, Pope Benedict told the new bishops that, like angels, their entire beings must be oriented toward God, and their mission is to be messengers of God.

The new bishops - a native of Poland and five Italians - included archbishops for Ukrainian and Italian archdioceses, a Vatican diplomat and three other Vatican officials.

Pope Benedict first laid his hands on the head of Coadjutor Archbishop Mieczyslaw Mokrzycki of the Latin-rite Archdiocese of Lviv, Ukraine; he had been the assistant personal secretary of Pope John Paul II and served as Pope Benedict's assistant secretary for the past two years.

The others ordained were: Archbishops Francesco Brugnaro of Camerino-San Severino Marche, Italy; Gianfranco Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture; Tommaso Caputo, nuncio to Malta and to Libya; and Bishops Sergio Pagano, prefect of the Vatican Secret Archives, and Vincenzo di Mauro, secretary of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See.

In his homily, Pope Benedict said a bishop "must be one who prays, who intercedes for people before God. The more he does so, the better he will understand the people who are entrusted to him, and he can become an angel for them - a messenger of God."

Like St. Michael, a bishop's task is to defend the truth about God's existence and "to create space for God in the world," which always is tempted to deny him, the pope said. Only by acknowledging God and seeking to fulfill his will can human beings

become all that God created them to be.

Like St. Gabriel, the pope said, a bishop must initiate contacts with people that will prepare them to accept Christ into their lives.

And, he said, like St. Raphael, a bishop must be a healer, promoting unity and restoring people's sight so that they can see God.